



The Congo Partnership had its beginnings in the late 1990's through a denominational emphasis called, *Hope for the Children of Africa*. In response to the request from African Bishops in **the United Methodist Church, the task force was created to assist in providing relief and reconciliation to innocent children** victims of wars, famines and the destruction of schools and hospitals. Every U.S. Annual Conference was asked to partner with an African Country or Episcopal Area.

#### **Enter Peninsula-Delaware Conference:**

In early 2000, Bishop Peter D. Weaver, resident bishop of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, and other Conference leaders saw that no other conference in the US had chosen Central Congo. After much prayer, the Peninsula-Delaware agreed to partner with the Central Congo Episcopal Area under the leadership of Bishop Joseph Fama Onema. Immediate financial support for the construction of an orphanage outside Kinshasa began and, in 2001, the Congo Partnership was officially launched and began support of the Mpsa Medical & Nutrition Center in a refugee area outside Kinshasa which had been initiated by UMCOR (United Methodist Committee of Relief) during the refugee crisis in the late 1990's when refugees fled to Congo from South Sudan, Angola, and east Congo. All of the Democratic Republic of Congo was engaged in civil conflict making the initial years of the Partnership challenging. But God continued to provide, allowing the U.S. Partners to travel to Congo in 2002 and again in 2004 as the conflict ceased. To honor Bishop Weaver and his vision for this Partnership, the Partnership was named the Peter D. Weaver Congo Partnership in 2004 when Bishop Weaver left the Philadelphia Episcopal Area and was assigned to the New England Area.

With the ultimate goal of self-sustainability for all projects, the Congolese are responsible and provide the oversight and leadership necessary for their success. As the scope of the projects in Congo grew to include support of various medical centers, schools, farm projects, nutrition projects, and fresh water, several new U.S. Partners joined the efforts. In 2012, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference officially joined the Partnership under Bishop Peggy Johnson. Bishop Johnson and many Eastern Pennsylvania Churches had been instrumental in helping launch new initiatives such as Children's Ministry, Cataract Surgery Missions, and outreach to the physically disabled children. In 2014, the W. North Carolina Conference joined the Partnership. W. North Carolina had historically been supportive of several projects in the Diengenga Mission Station such as the Jack & Renie Miner Trade School and Mama Tola Secondary School for which the Partnership assumed support. In addition to these three U.S. Conferences, support for various Partnership Projects has come from across the connection as God continues to bless the efforts.

In 2006, the Partnership established its first Covenant Agreement signed by Bishop David Yemba from the Central Congo Episcopal Area and Bishop Marcus Matthews, Bishop of the Philadelphia Episcopal Area in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference and again signed in Congo in 2007 at the West Congo

Annual Conference in Kinshasa. Bishop Johnson and Bishop Yemba renewed the Covenant Agreement in 2008 and 2015 and a new Agreement was signed by Bishop Johnson and newly elected Bishop Daniel Lunge in 2017. The Covenant is review regularly by all the Partnership and new projects are set in response to the Congolese Bishop's priorities. While the projects may change, the Covenant Agreement describes the heart of our Partnership and our relationship.

### **Congo Partnership Covenant Agreement**

The Partnership is a vision of the Central Congo Episcopal Area and three United States Conferences: Peninsula-Delaware Conference, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, and Western North Carolina Conference to bring glory to God and care for our neighbors. Our Partnership seeks to bring the renewal and restoration of spiritual and material ministries for the whole Church and especially its children. Christ's Church has been given the commission to be a sign of hope in a world that is perishing, a sign that the dominion of division, destitution, despair and death is being overcome through the love of God that is poured out in our hearts and made manifest by our deeds. Through this partnership we have the opportunity to give dramatic testimony to the unity of the Body of Christ, the mutuality of love, and the promise of life that overcomes death.

The purpose of the Partnership is to develop a healthy relationship between brothers and sisters in Christ across cultures through God's grace that is transformational and inspirational. The goal of the Partnership is to have honest and open interaction with the partners, carefully listening to one another as equal parts of the body of Christ. It is a sacred covenant to support one another and participate equally and proportionally in a ministry or project. We agree to pray for one another and to value the spiritual gifts and faith each brings to the partnership, acknowledging these as equal to, or even more important than, financial and human resources. The goal of the mission is a self-sustaining United Methodist Church with holistic ministries empowering people in their context, community and country.

The partners will set aside their own agendas and create a collective vision for the ministry together. As with any relationship, each participant brings God-given gifts, whether spiritual, physical or mental, tangible or intangible, which will be honored and appreciated equally by all partners in the covenant agreement.

We pledge not to do for the other what they can do for themselves. We gladly serve each other as Christ has served us, with humility, love and encouragement, building a strong foundation for the ministry together.

We create mutual accountability and transparency through patiently engaging one another. We will be flexible and adaptable, enabling all partners to bridge language and culture through God's guidance.